281 Fats, usually of plant origin, either wild or domestic, are then used to lubricate and soften the skin. This is hard manual work, lasting sometimes several days. Most commonly preferred is the castor oil bean, called "qaçhma" or "gulqwas". The skin may now be kneaded or stamped by feet, to work the fats in and render the skin soft for the cutting and fashioning of objects, which now follows.

282 411 The shield was formerly one of the major products of the Faqi, but now is made rarely and only for ornamental use. The rhinoceros or buffalo skin is cut circular, placed over a wooden stake in the ground, the rim pegged down, to prepare the cupola shape. The skin is then depilated, dried, smeared with oils to expand again. It is beaten to increase its resistance. Incised decorations and the pulling through of the leather handle, are done before the shield is entirely hard and dry. Metal decor is added later, by the smith, after the Faqi has delivered his product.

282 [854] [415] [283] More common products, still made today, are: half-sack, "ənqälba", for carrying the baby on the mother's back, with straps and a bottom tied to the mother's shoulders, chest and waist; full sacks, "aqomada", for transporting grain to market, tied with strips (these are also used for various storage in the better Amhara huts); straps cut of poor skins in all kinds and sizes, "qeralla", some for tying loads onto donkeys, some to serve as more springy diagonal straps of the better "alga" bed; a fine, tanned cowskin used as blanket; "jändi", cover

282 over the "alga" bedstead.

Sheepskins ("debdeb") are used as upholstery over the solid clay bench that runs along the inside of the Amhara hut, as cover for the children at night, or to protect a mule from chafing by placing the sheepskin under the saddle. Other sheepskins, "agoza" or "dabälo", are worn by church students too poor to own a good toga. Several skins make a coat for an adult itinerant monk and, formerly, for the warriors.

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[415] Goatskins, when little-worked, are used for water carrying ("qärbäta") on travel, or to store butter in. The bladder is made into a little bag. But goatskins carefully and at length scraped and tanned are made into parchment for amulets and books, especially psalteries for the church. These yellow-brown parchments ("berana") with religious or warrior-king texts were rolled into a goatskin cover. Since contact with European missionaries in the mid-19th century, the custom has been to sew parchment pages together on one side with a twisted gut, bind the book in this fashion within two wooden covers covered with a red, tanned goatskin, on which a cross with even branches is impressed with a hot iron.

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[531] In the same fashion scabbards of daggers are covered and ornamented with impressed, geometric lines. The tanned tailskin of a cow is used to cover a better walking stick, on which it gradually dries fast. Drums for use in church (and formerly for royal proclamations) are made by tanned cowskins stretched over both ends of the wooden body. Finely tanned skins are used to cover the

[534]

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954) 1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

282 aforementioned foodbasket for travel (the "agelgel"). Drinking horns and cups of "great men" (feudal lords) and landholding Amhara peasants are sometimes similarly covered by ornamental skins.

282 492 The saddle, "koreçha", is still an important product of the Faqi, after the carpenter-smith has prepared its wooden basis. It has a high front pummel of wood, and a high wooden backrest, both held together by the saddle-tree of two wooden planks at a wide angle to each other. This is covered by the Faqi with a very thick, strong, parchment-like cowskin, sewn carefully and tightly through holes drilled in the wood, and ornamented with line designs, often after dying the skin black with soot obtained from the "qänṭäṭef" creeper vine. [386]

Saddlemaking, like shield-making, caused much displacement of the Faqi during the long periods of warring chieftains and their armies. The great pride of an Amhara horseman was to have well-made and ornamented leather equipment for his horse, on its head, chest and back. Here the tanner often had to work in close cooperation with the smith. The iron ring of the stirrup (still in use); ornamental metal discs; the iron mouth pieces which resemble the Arab type and press tongue to mandible so that the horse reacts painfully to the slightest direction of the little finger, were common and still are in many districts. Gold or silver ornaments for the horse were important decorations for bravery given by the king especially to officers of high Amhara nobility. They are still honored as family heirlooms.

302 attempting to grow a rich one. This rich beard - though really a full goatee - is called "tïïa aron" (lit. beard of Aaron) in Geez, and is worn with the pride of the elder. Hair is also left on the upper lip, but usually does not grow very long or rich.

301 Ornaments are worn almost exclusively by women, and often include items that also have utility; the metal or wooden pin ("walaba" or "wolba") that is stuck in the tight hair and also used to scratch; an earwax spoon of metal, suspended from the matab neckcord on which are also suspended a small cross, amulets, (keys in modern situation), etc. Necklaces ("qwad") may be of wooden beads. In recent years country women have become very fond of a necklace of imported bluish glass rings ("deba"), which can do double duty in scouring and burnishing the clay pottery. A necklace of 150 of these rings costs 50 ¢ (Ethiopian). Also widespread is the use of a beaded strap with a large button-like center ("shotïïalay") which is worn on the forehead as an amulet, e.g. by women who have sufferred several miscarriages. A metal bracelet, ("ambar") was formerly given to soldiers as decoration, but has now become a women's fashion, worn on upper arms or legs.

B. Fine Arts

531 [566] Artistic expression in the fine arts bears the stamp of the feudal lord, who alone was in a position to order, encourage and reward individual craftsmen and their apprentices; and of the Abyssinian Coptic church.

The feudal lord commanded decorative arts relating to warfare, such [282] as the previously described rhinoceros shields. Another common object is the saddlecover ("degus"), made by experienced tanners out of leather, with geometric designs impressed by hot irons; fine leather stitching; and metal ornaments fastened on by the smiths. These designs and ornaments are still found, e.g. on leather cases containing the "dawit" (Psalter) written on parchment made of tanned goatskin.